

HIPERCOLESTEROLEMIA FAMILIAR: un modelo para la prevención cardiovascular

El aumento del colesterol de causa genética suele pasar inadvertido.

Las personas con hipercolesterolemia familiar (HF) son uno de los mayores colectivos con un trastorno de origen genético, estimándose que una de cada 400-500 personas en la población general están afectadas. Esto significa que en nuestro país existen de 80.000 a 100.000 personas con HF.

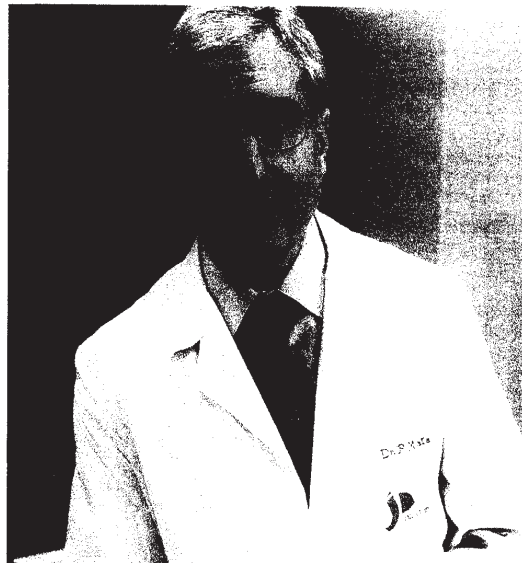
Es una enfermedad hereditaria que produce unos niveles elevados de colesterol desde el nacimiento, con el consiguiente aumento en el riesgo de presentar un infarto de miocardio u otra enfermedad cardiovascular prematura. En el caso de no seguir un tratamiento adecuado, el 75 por ciento de estos pacientes sufrirán un infarto de miocardio antes de los 60 años. Esto significa que la presencia de HF reduce la esperanza de vida de 20 a 30 años en comparación con las personas sanas. Sin embargo, con un diagnóstico y un tratamiento precoz, las personas con HF pueden tener una esperanza de vida similar a la del resto de la población. Los modernos fármacos como las estatinas pueden normalizar las concentraciones de colesterol en las personas con HF y ayudar a prevenir el infarto de miocardio.

Está causada por el mal funcionamiento de un gen que codifica el receptor de la LDL (lipoproteínas de baja densidad o colesterol "malo"), una proteína encargada de la regulación y eliminación del colesterol de la sangre. Cada persona tiene dos genes, uno heredado del padre y otro de la madre. Si se hereda el gen defectuoso de uno de los padres, se presenta el trastorno.

La persona afectada de HF tiene el 50 por ciento de probabilidades de transmitir el gen anormal a sus hijos/as. La HF se puede sospechar clínicamente por un aumento en los niveles de colesterol (generalmente superiores a 300 mg/dl), antecedentes de aumento del colesterol en familiares, especialmente en niños,

así como de enfermedad cardiovascular prematura (infarto de miocardio, angina de pecho...) en edades tempranas. Sin embargo, el diagnóstico definitivo es la demostración de la mutación en el gen del receptor LDL.

Los test genéticos representan el progreso en el cuidado de la salud y una oportunidad para llevar el desarrollo a la medicina preventiva, ya que pueden detectar las enfermedades en su fase presintomática, puesto que en la HF existen múltiples mutaciones causales, que además son diferentes en distintas poblaciones del mundo. La



CONSEJOS PARA MEJORAR SU SALUD

● Recomendaciones nutricionales

Consumir frutas, verduras, cereales, pasta, legumbres, frutos secos, pescado, porciones magras de carnes (especialmente aves), productos lácteos bajos en grasas y aceite de oliva como principal fuente de grasa. Evitar el consumo excesivo de sal y azúcar. Si toma alcohol, su consumo debe ser moderado.

● Realizar ejercicio físico regularmente

La actividad física mejora nuestra salud en general,

incluyendo el mantenimiento del peso y el estado de nuestro corazón. Cualquier tipo de actividad física siempre es mejor que ser sedentario.

● Evitar el tabaco

El consumo de tabaco disminuye la expectativa de vida y predispone a enfermedades crónicas como las cardiovasculares, pulmonares y cáncer.

● Pruebe las comidas sanas que forman parte de la cultura y tradiciones de España.

Fundación de Hipercolesterolemia Familiar, en combinación con la Red de Hiperlipemias Familiares del Instituto de Salud Carlos III ha completado la identificación genética de la HF en España (más de 250 mutaciones diferentes), que ha permitido, con la colaboración del laboratorio español Lácer, el desarrollo del primer ADN-chip (Lipo-chip®) en el mundo para el diagnóstico genético rápido y preciso de la HF.

El Dr. Pedro Mata, jefe clínico de Medicina Interna de la Fundación Jiménez Díaz y presidente de

la Fundación Hipercolesterolemia Familiar recomienda un plan de detección genético puesto que la HF tiene un diagnóstico genético de certeza y un tratamiento eficaz, y es un excelente modelo para realizar un programa de detección poblacional mediante un cribado familiar.

Para poner en marcha un plan de detección a nivel familiar se deberían realizar los siguientes pasos: identificación de un precedente en la familia mediante los criterios clínicos de sospecha y confirmación mediante el análisis

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genético. Posteriormente, se debe contactar con los familiares de 1º y 2º grado y se les debe realizar el diagnóstico genético (cribado en cascada familiar). A estas personas se les debe iniciar un tratamiento y un seguimiento periódico.

La puesta en marcha de un programa de detección genética de la HF a nivel familiar es un modelo ideal para iniciar un programa de prevención cardiovascular en un subgrupo poblacional con elevado riesgo de desarrollar una enfermedad cardiovascular prematura. La realización del diagnóstico genético es coste-eficaz y forma parte de una medicina individualizada y predictiva. ■

FAMILIAL HYPERCHOLESTEROLAEMIA:

A Model for Cardiovascular Prevention

A cholesterol increase with a genetic cause generally goes overlooked.

People with familial hypercholesterolaemia (FH) are one of the largest groups of individuals with a genetically originated disorder. It is estimated that one in every 400 to 500 members of the general population is affected. This means that there are anything from 80,000 to 100,000 people in Spain with FH.

FH is a hereditary disease which produces high cholesterol levels from birth, with a consequently increased risk of heart attacks or other premature cardiovascular diseases. If not properly treated, 75% of these patients will have a heart attack before they are 60. This means that FH reduces life expectancy by 20 to 30 years in comparison with a healthy person. Nevertheless, early diagnosis and treatment can enable FH sufferers to have a life expectancy similar to that of the rest of the population. Modern drugs like statins can normalise cholesterol levels in people with FH and thereby help to prevent heart attacks.

The disorder is caused by a malfunction in a gene which codifies the receptor of LDL-cholesterol (low density lipoproteins, or 'bad'

cholesterol), a protein whose mission is to regulate and eliminate cholesterol in the blood. Each person has two genes, one inherited from the father and the other from the mother. If the defective gene is inherited from either parent, the disease makes its appearance.

A person affected with FH has a 50% chance of transmitting the abnormal gene to his or her children. FH's clinical warning signs include a rise in cholesterol levels (generally higher than 300 mg/dl), precedents of high cholesterol in other members of the family (especially children), and heart attacks, anginas and other premature cardiovascular diseases at an early age. The final diagnosis, however, is made by showing up the mutation in the gene of the LDL-cholesterol receptor.

Genetic tests are a mark of progress in health care, and provide an opportunity for developments in preventive medicine, since they can detect illnesses before symptoms appear. FH is caused by multiple mutations which furthermore vary among the world's different populations. The Familial Hypercholesterolaemia Foundation and the Carlos III Health Institute's Familial Hyperlipaemia Network have jointly completed the genetic identification of FH in Spain, which has over 250 different mutations. With the collaboration of the Spanish lab Lacer, this has enabled the development of the Lipochip®, the world's first DNA chip for rapid and precise genetic diagnosis of FH.

Dr Pedro Mata, the clinical head of Internal Medicine at the Jiménez Díaz Foundation and chairman of the Familial Hypercholesterolaemia Foundation, recommends genetic detection programmes because they provide a reliable diagnosis and effective treatment for FH. Family screening programmes are a particularly good framework for detecting the disorder among the population.

To start a family detection



programme, the following steps need to be taken. First, a suspected precedent in the family needs to be identified with clinical criteria and confirmed by genetic analysis. Then, all relatives to the first and second degree have to be contacted and put through the genetic diagnostic test in a so-called 'family cascade' screening. These people should then be treated and periodically

monitored.

Setting up a family FH genetic detection programme provides an ideal model for cardiovascular prevention programmes in larger population groups with a high risk of contracting cardiovascular disease prematurely. Genetic diagnosis is a cost-effective and individualised branch of predictive medicine. ■



10 tips to improve your health

- **Drink water** - Adequate hydration is essential for overall health.
- **Reduce salt intake** - Limiting sodium helps lower blood pressure.
- **Eat fruits and vegetables** - These are rich in antioxidants and fiber.
- **Limit alcohol** - Excessive drinking can lead to liver and heart problems.
- **Exercise** - Regular physical activity improves cardiovascular health.
- **Get enough sleep** - Poor sleep affects metabolism and stress levels.
- **Don't smoke** - Tobacco is a leading cause of chronic diseases.
- **Limit sugar** - High sugar intake is linked to obesity and diabetes.
- **Use sunscreen** - Protect your skin from UV rays to prevent skin cancer.
- **Stay up to date on vaccinations** - Regular check-ups and vaccines prevent many illnesses.
- **Manage stress** - Chronic stress can harm the heart and mental health.
- **Limit red meat** - Excessive consumption is associated with heart disease.
- **Get regular dental check-ups** - Oral health is linked to overall well-being.
- **Use a seat belt** - This simple habit can save lives.
- **Limit screen time** - Too much sedentary time is bad for health.
- **Don't drink and drive** - It's a dangerous combination.
- **Take your medications as prescribed** - Don't skip doses or stop abruptly.
- **Get a regular physical** - Early detection of health issues is key.
- **Limit processed foods** - These often contain high levels of salt, sugar, and fat.
- **Use stairs** - A simple way to increase daily physical activity.
- **Limit caffeine** - Too much can lead to anxiety and sleep issues.
- **Don't use your phone while driving** - Distracted driving is a major cause of accidents.
- **Get a good mattress** - Quality sleep is essential for recovery and health.
- **Limit trans fats** - Found in many processed foods, they are bad for heart health.
- **Use hand sanitizer** - Helps prevent the spread of germs.
- **Limit sugary drinks** - Opt for water or unsweetened beverages.
- **Get a flu shot** - Annual vaccination is important for many people.
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